MARVEL

GILLEN
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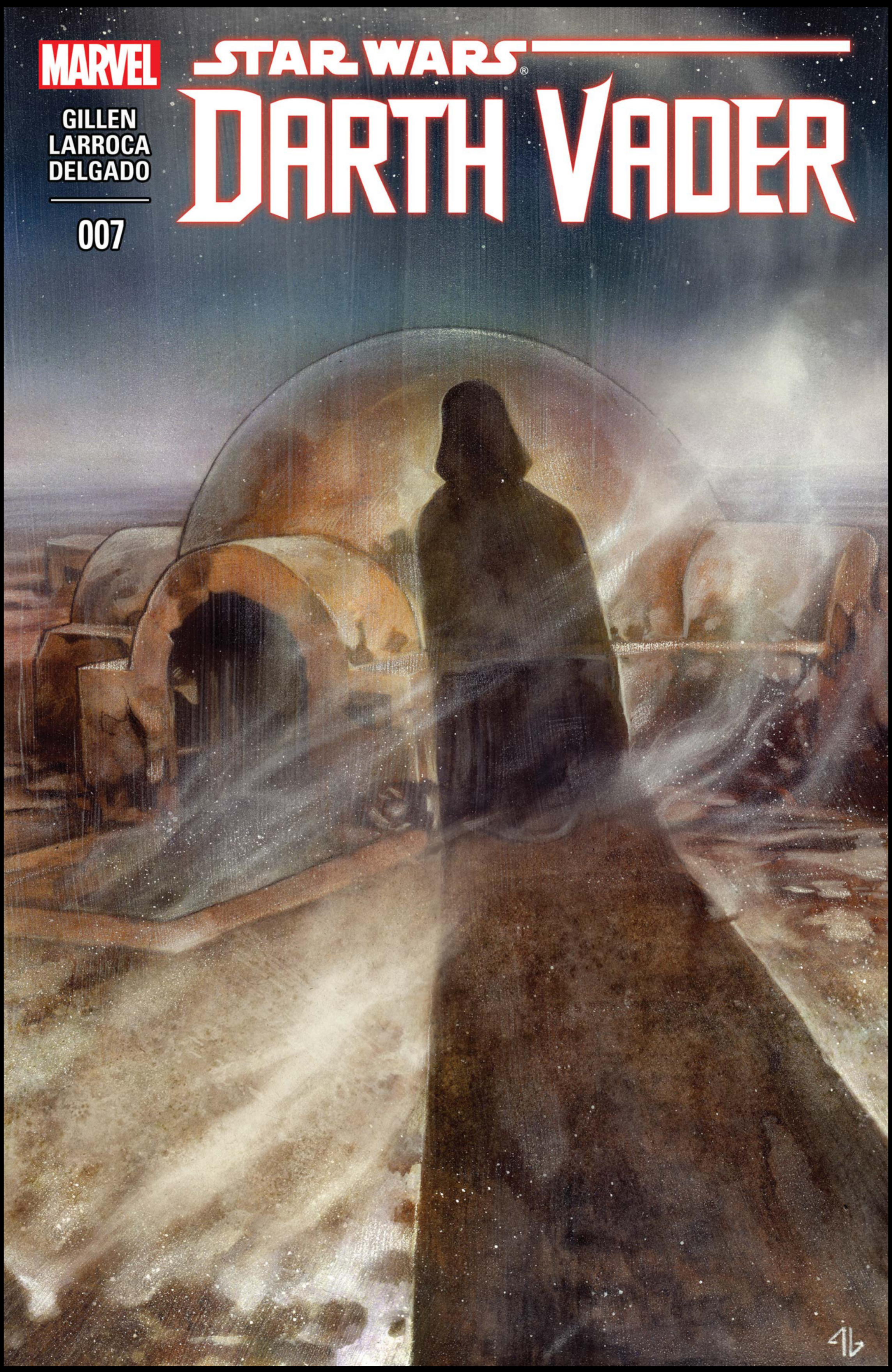
007

STAR WARS® DARTH VADER



Book II, Part I

SHADOWS AND SECRETS

Disorder engulfs the galaxy. After the destruction of the Death Star by a mysterious Force-strong rebel pilot, the Sith Lord DARTH VADER was deemed responsible by his master, EMPEROR PALPATINE. Now pursuing his own agenda – the pilot's identity – Vader recruited bounty hunter BOBA FETT and archaeologist DOCTOR APHRA.

Pitted by the Emperor against a new array of rivals for his position in the Empire, Vader's rage at being doubted was compounded by an even more shocking revelation—the rebel pilot he sought was actually the son he never knew he'd had.

Now, alongside Aphra, the Sith Lord returns to his home planet of Tatooine to the former homestead of the pilot, following a trail left behind by Boba Fett and the young Skywalker....

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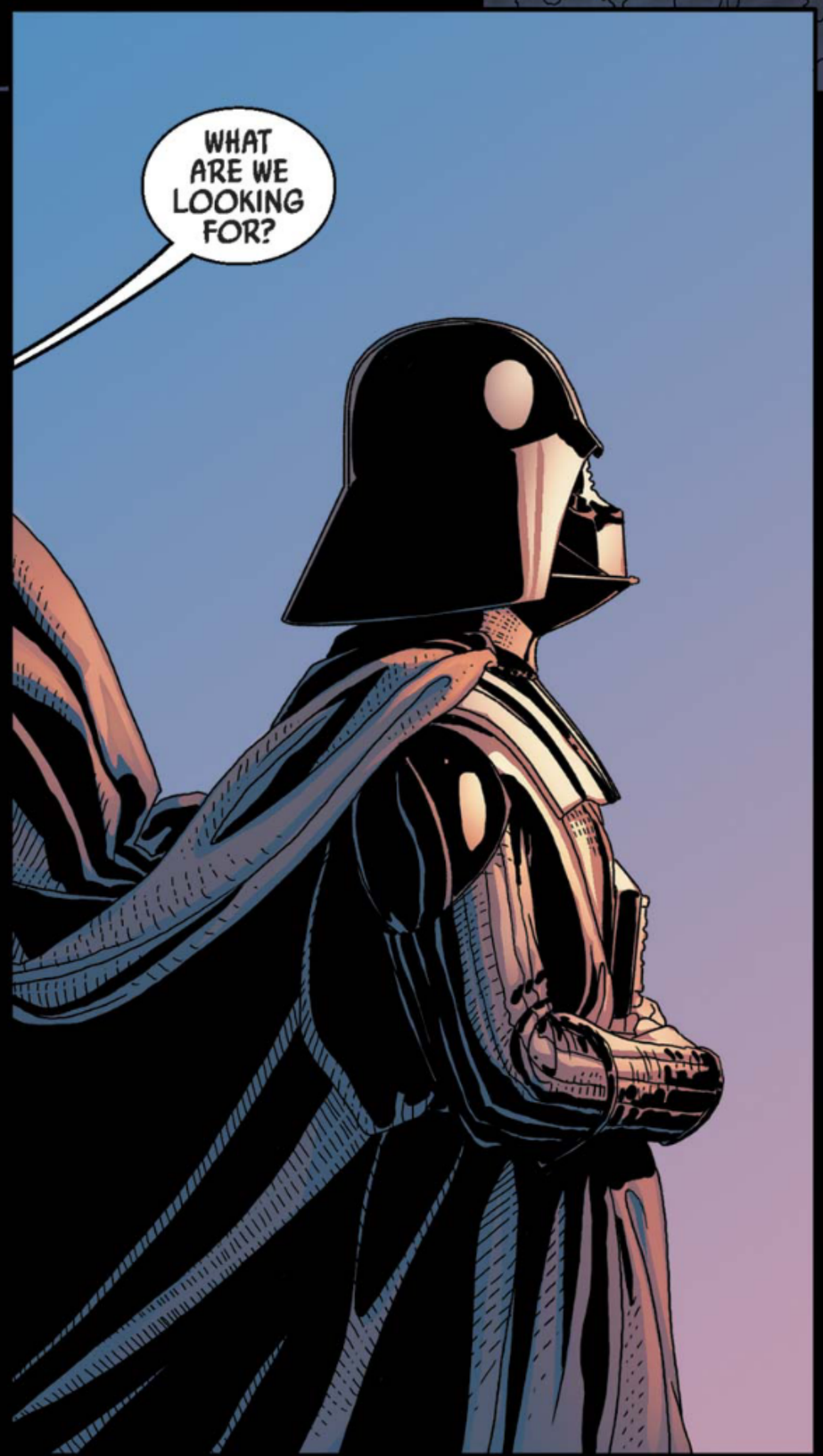
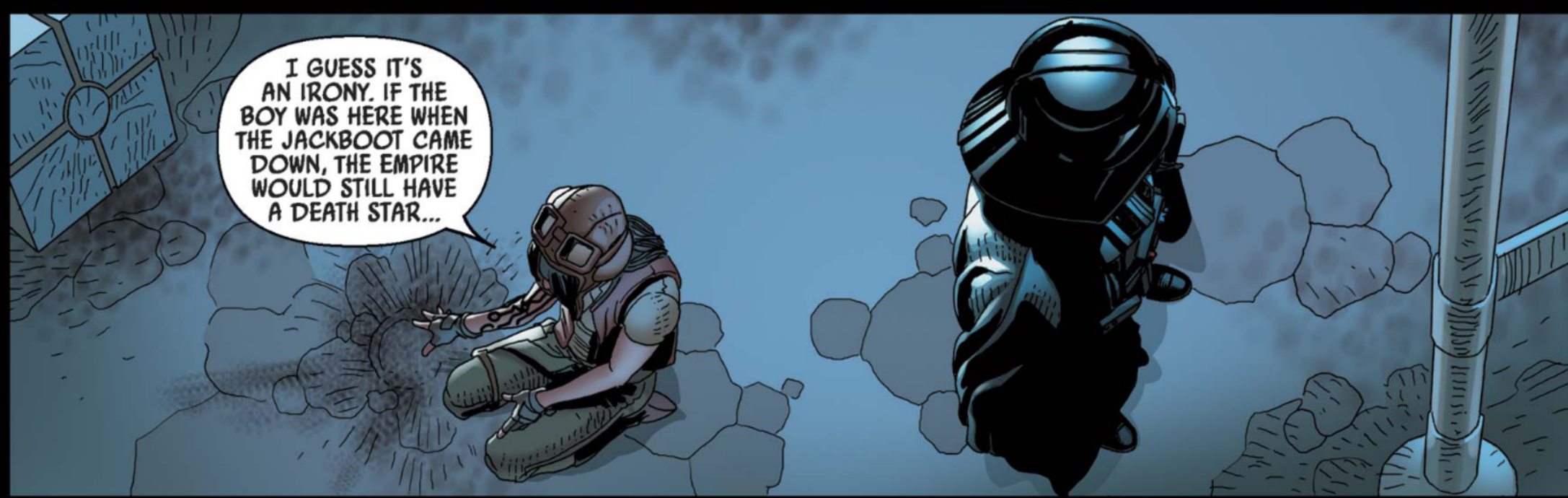
Tatooine.


WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

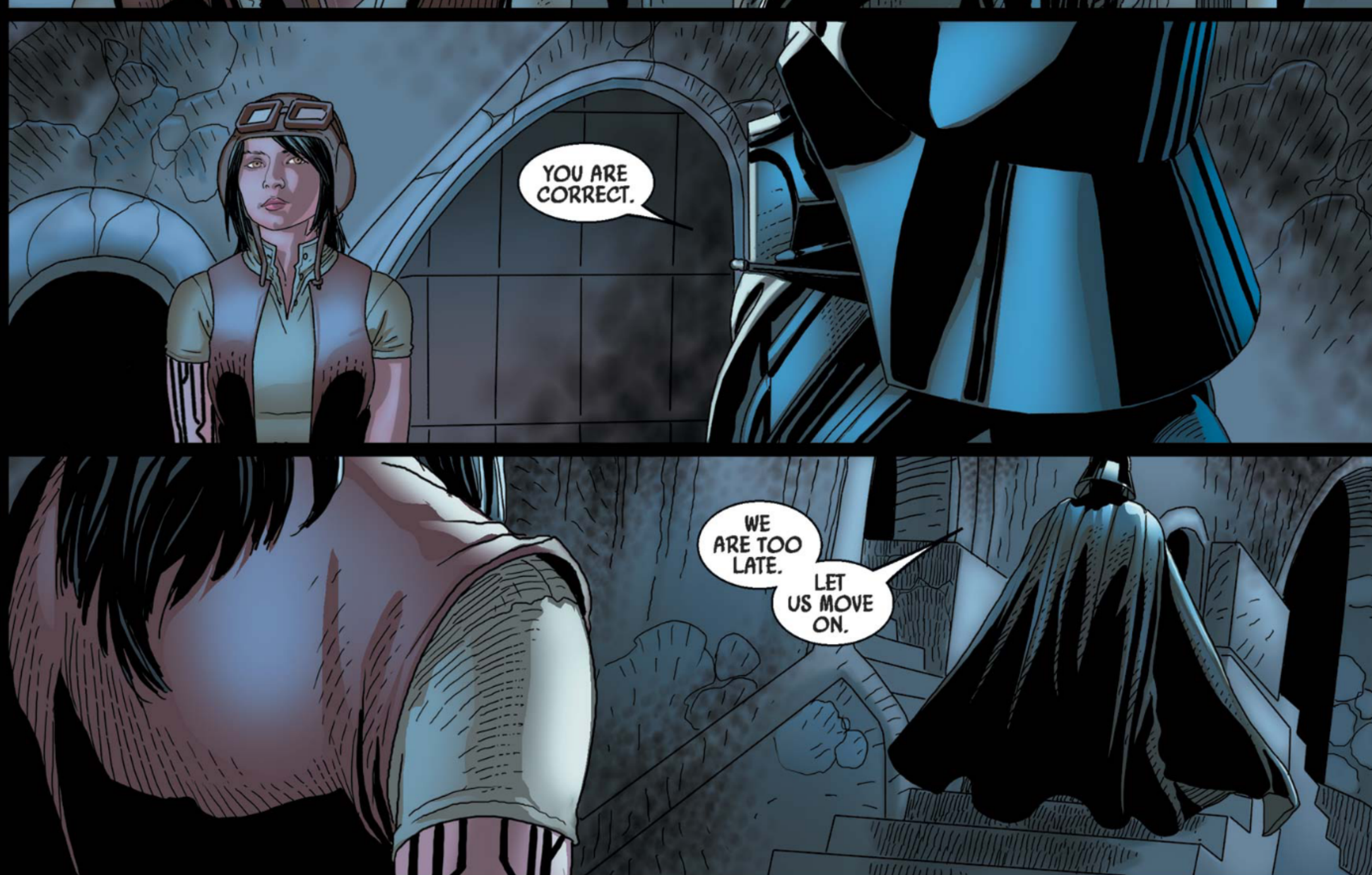
THE PLACE IS DEAD. IT'S BEEN DEAD FOR WEEKS. NO ONE ALIVE. NOTHING INSIDE.
THE BOY WHO DESTROYED THE DEATH STAR LIVED HERE.
HE LEFT WHEN HIS... FAMILY WAS SLAIN.

THERE IS PERHAPS A TRACE OF HIS PRESENCE...
AH, FORCE STUFF. UNDERSTOOD. I'LL LEAVE YOU TO IT.
HMM.
IMPERIAL BLASTERS BENEATH THE BURNS...
YOUR LOT WERE ACTING COVERTLY HERE? STILL A LITTLE TWITCHY WHEN THE SENATE WAS JUST FRESH IN THE GROUND?
OH MY. SUCH SLAUGHTER.
SUCH TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER...
THOSE POOR DROIDS.


I GUESS IT'S AN IRONY. IF THE BOY WAS HERE WHEN THE JACKBOOT CAME DOWN, THE EMPIRE WOULD STILL HAVE A DEATH STAR...

...BUT IF THE FAMILY WASN'T KILLED, MAYBE HE'D NEVER HAVE LEFT.

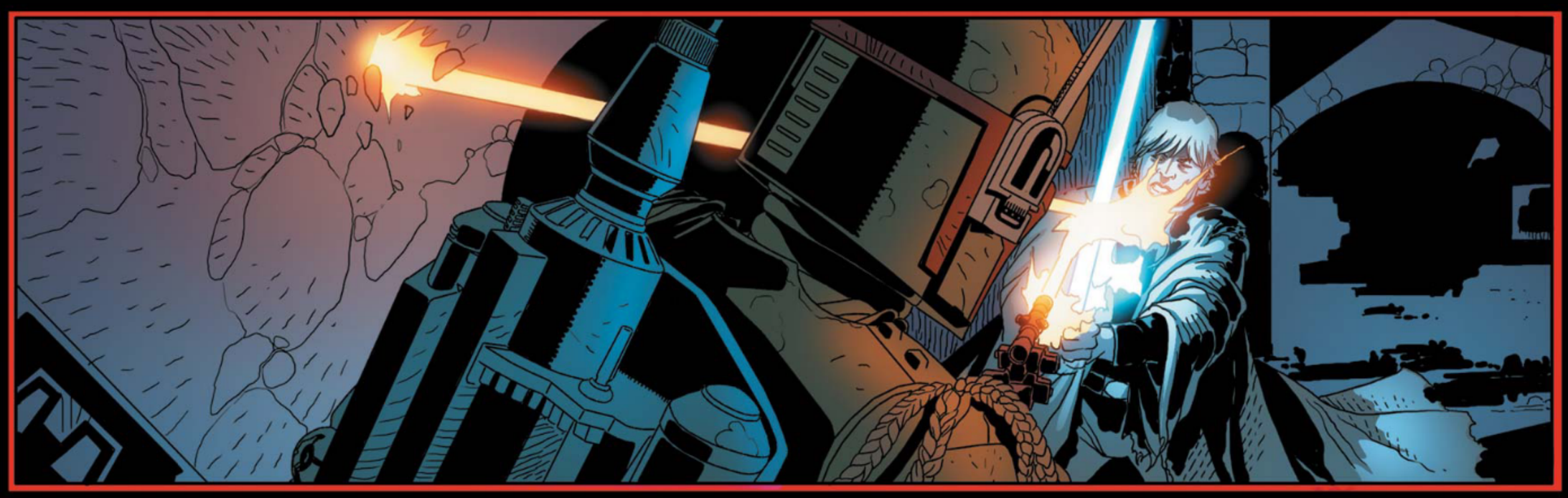
REVENGE IS ONE HELL OF A MOTIVATOR.

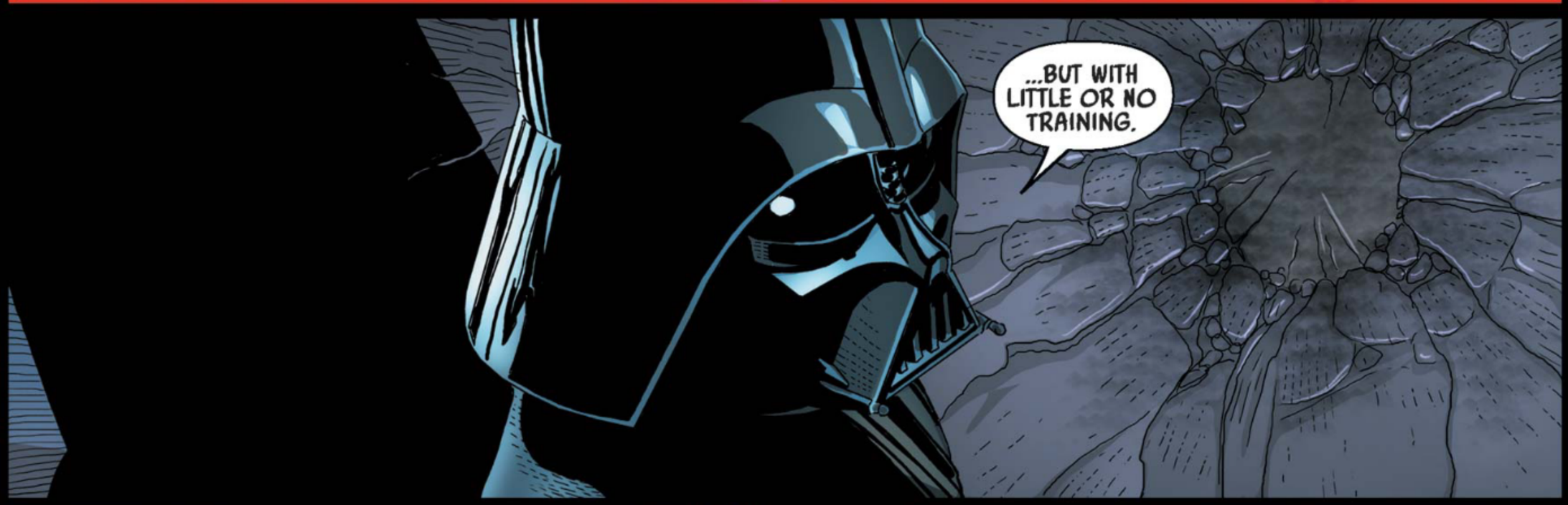

YOU ARE CORRECT.
WE ARE TOO LATE.
LET US MOVE ON.

ASSUMING MISTER GREATEST-BOUNTY-HUNTER-IN-THE-GALAXY HAS GOT HIS GRID-REFS RIGHT, THIS IS WHERE BOBA FETT FOUGHT THE BOY...

WAIT UNTIL SIGNALED.

HE FENDED OFF THE BOUNTY HUNTER.
THE BOY IS STRONG IN THE FORCE...

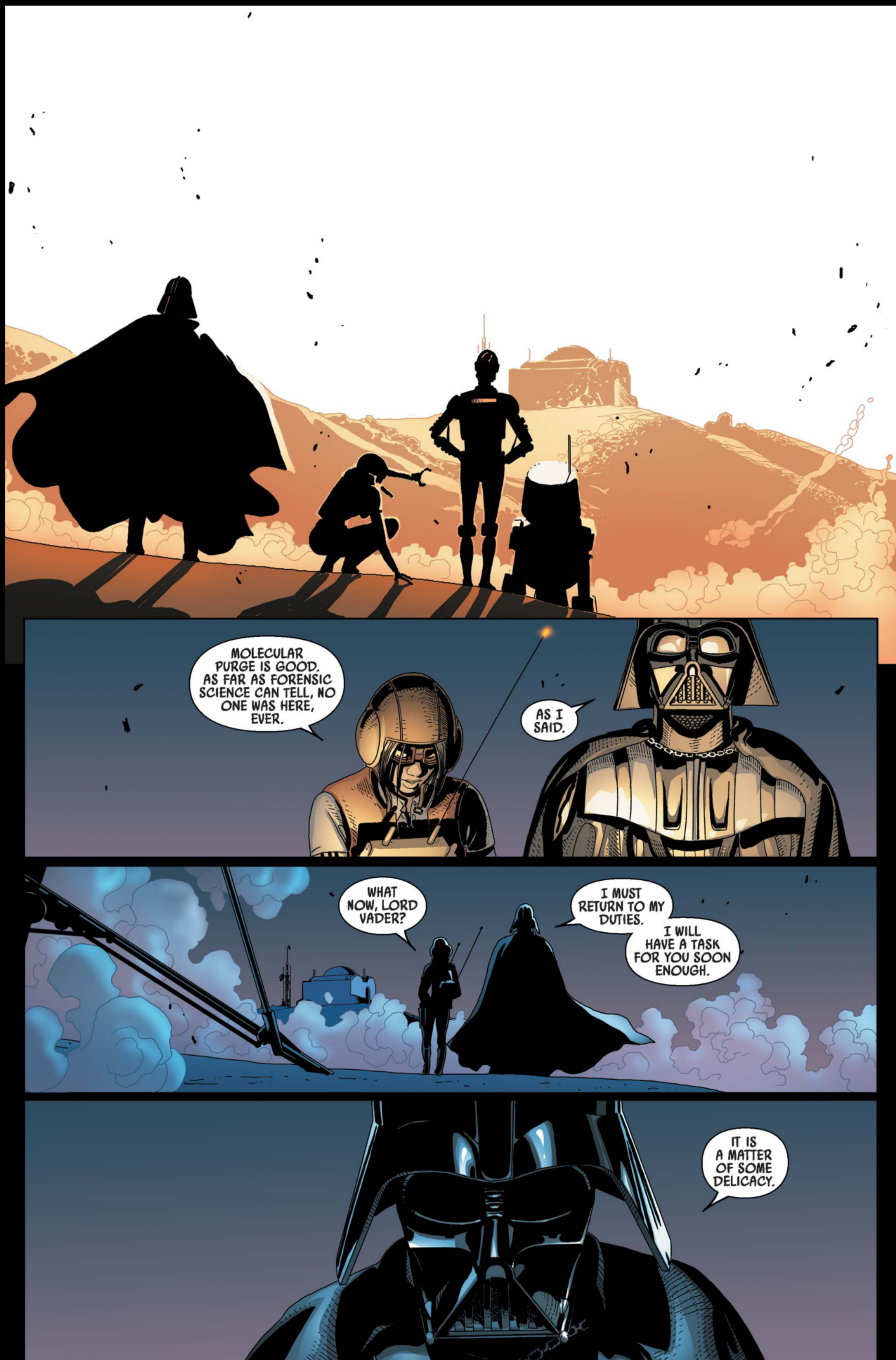


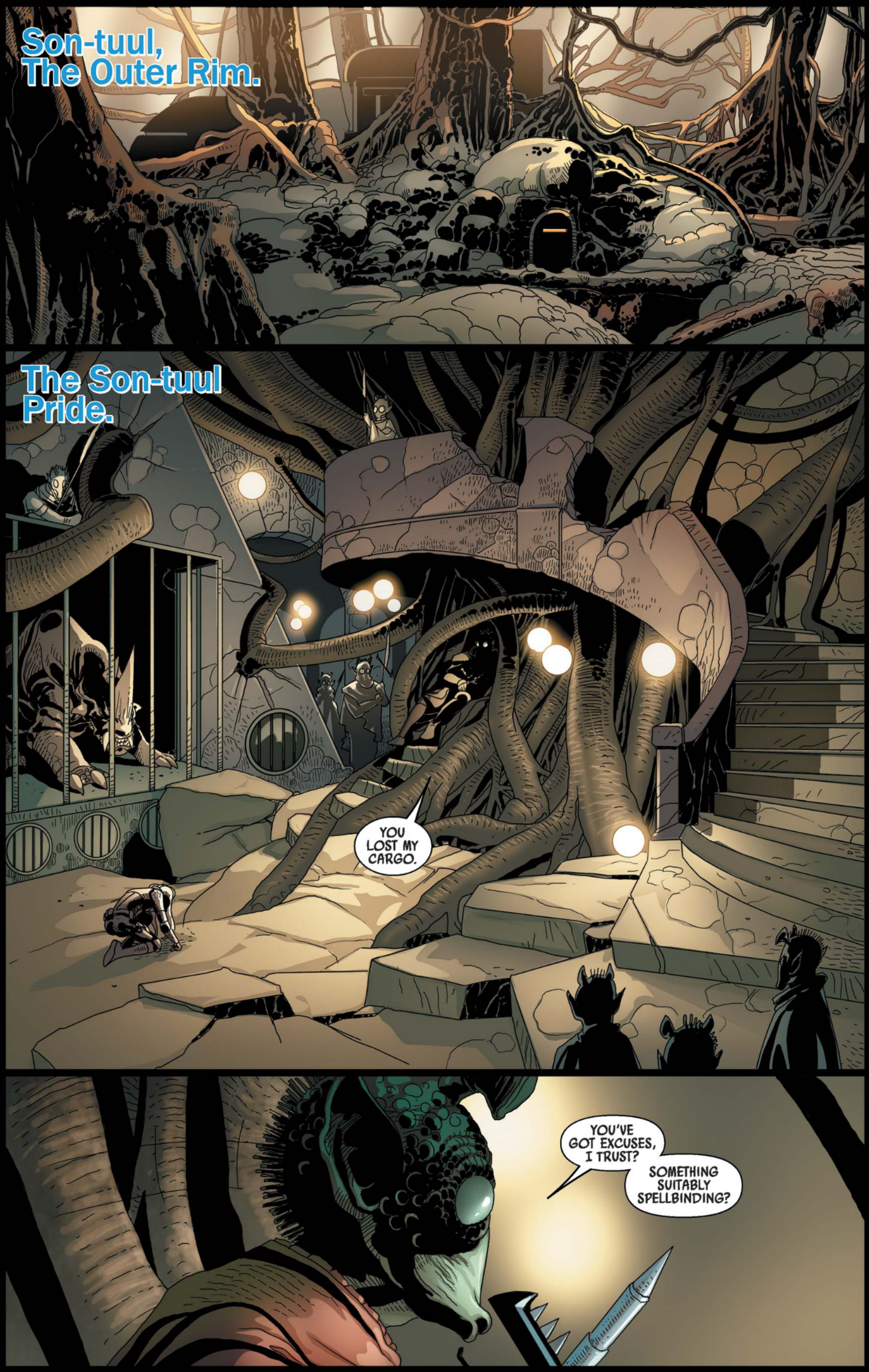

...BUT WITH LITTLE OR NO TRAINING.

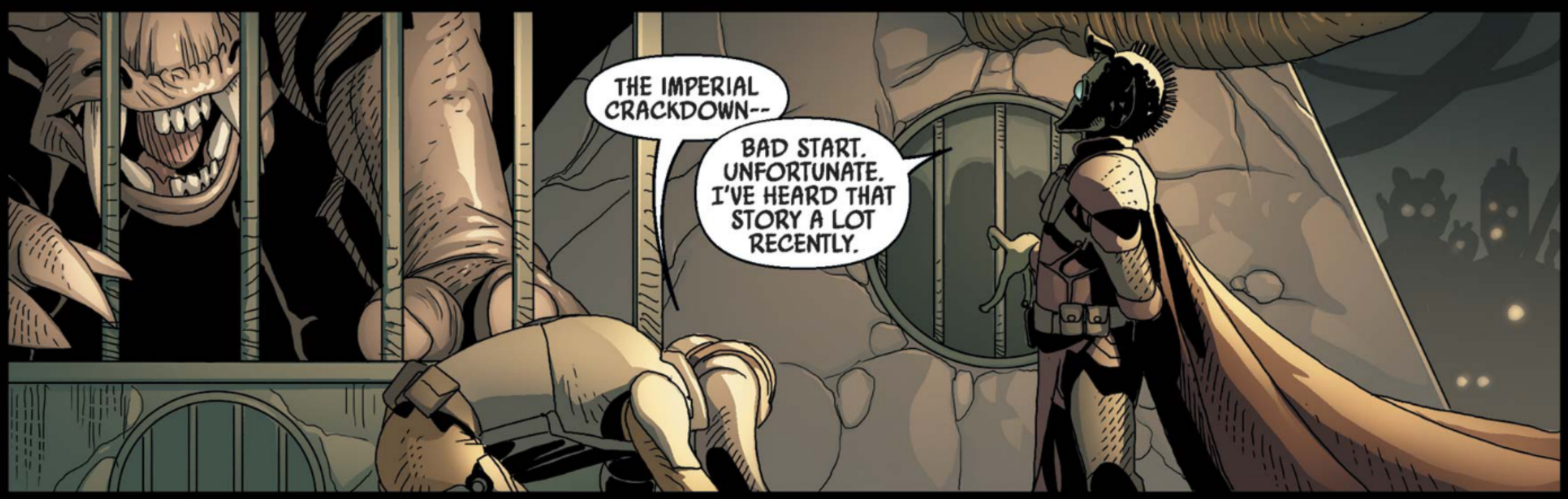
YOU HAD TWENTY YEARS, OBI-WAN.
HIDING THE BOY IN THE ONE PLACE I WOULD NEVER RETURN WAS CUNNING, BUT IN THIS, YOU ARE A FAILURE.

APHRA. I AM DONE.
THERE IS NOTHING HERE.

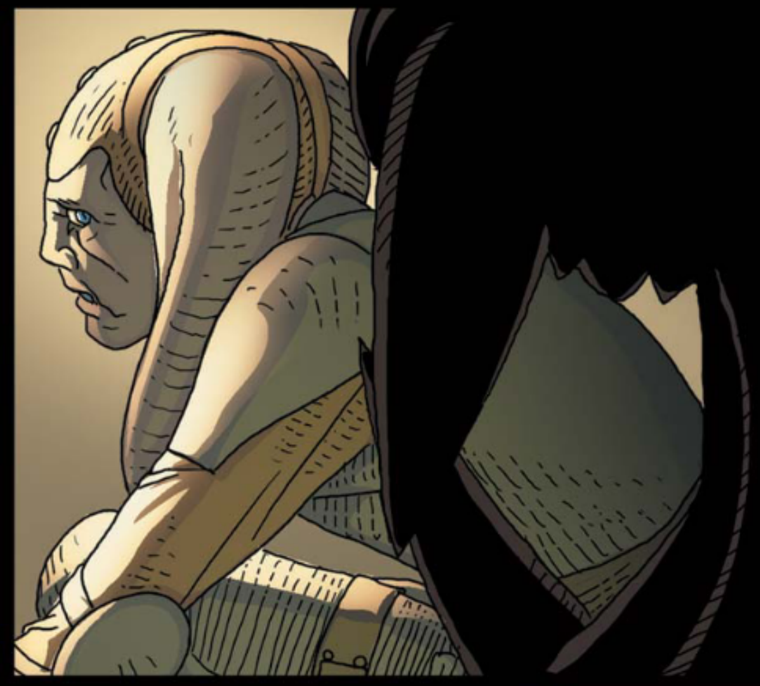
GREAT.
WHERE DO YOU WANT THE BOMB?


MOLECULAR PURGE IS GOOD. AS FAR AS FORENSIC SCIENCE CAN TELL, NO ONE WAS HERE, EVER.
AS I SAID.
WHAT NOW, LORD VADER?
I MUST RETURN TO MY DUTIES.
I WILL HAVE A TASK FOR YOU SOON ENOUGH.
IT IS A MATTER OF SOME DELICACY.


Son-tuul,
The Outer Rim.
The Son-tuul
Pride.
YOU LOST MY CARGO.
YOU'VE GOT EXCUSES, I TRUST?
SOMETHING SUITABLY SPELLBINDING?


THE IMPERIAL CRACKDOWN--
BAD START. UNFORTUNATE. I'VE HEARD THAT STORY A LOT RECENTLY.

AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT I THOUGHT OF THAT STORY?



ASK THEM...

IF YOU ARE INCAPABLE OF READING SUBTEXT...

...I WAS NOT IMPRESSED.

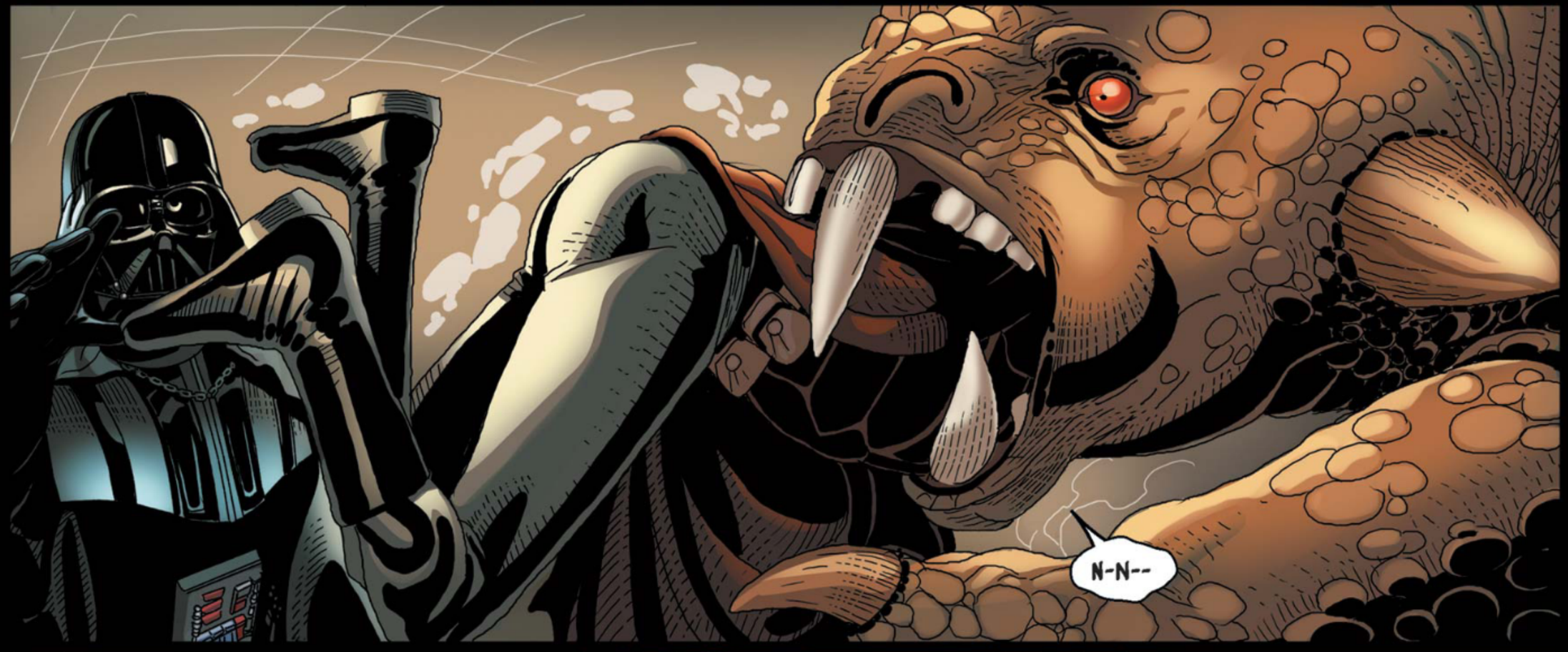
CHOMP
THE IMPERIALS ARE TRYING HARDER? ALL THIS MEANS IS THAT YOU SHOULD TRY HARDER TOO.
THE ONE THING THAT PLEASES ME?
FOR ALL YOUR FEAR OF YOUR IMPERIALS, YOU CAME HERE. YOU'RE STILL MORE AFRAID OF ME.
FOR THAT, YOUR DEATH WILL BE SWIFT AND RELATIVELY PAINLESS.
...WHAT'S THIS?
AN IMPERIAL TRACER.

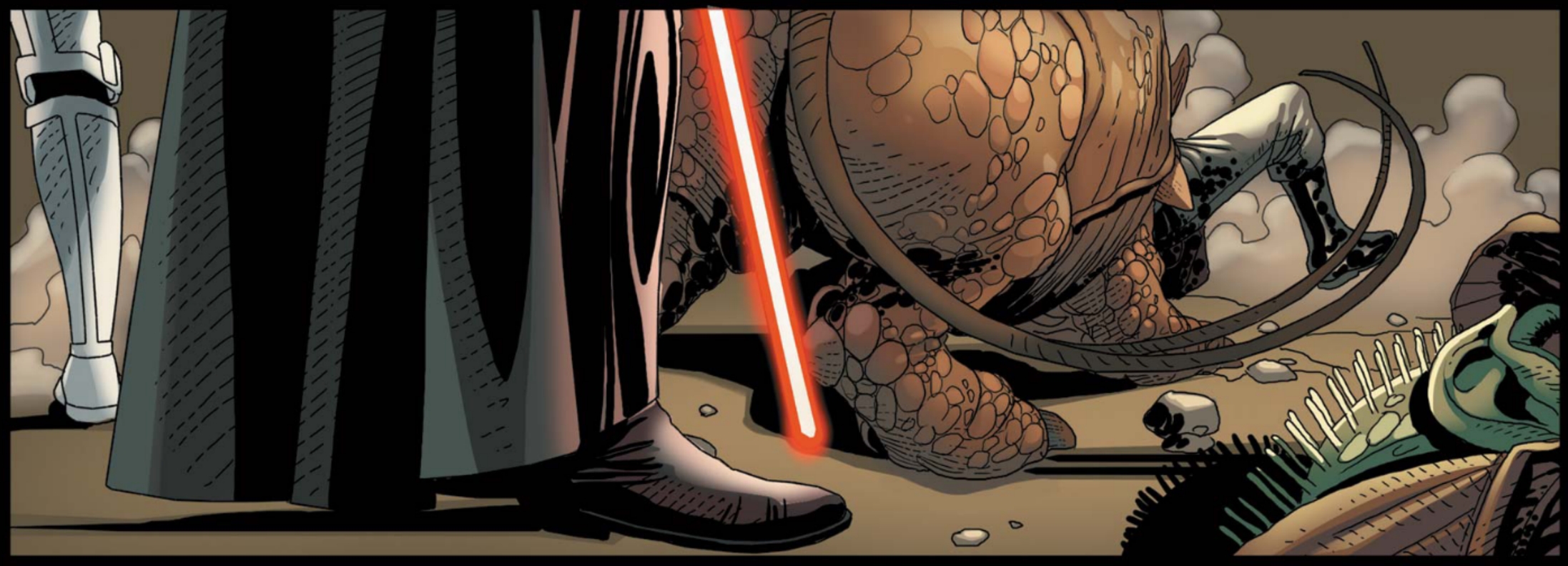
IT IS POINTLESS TO RESIST.

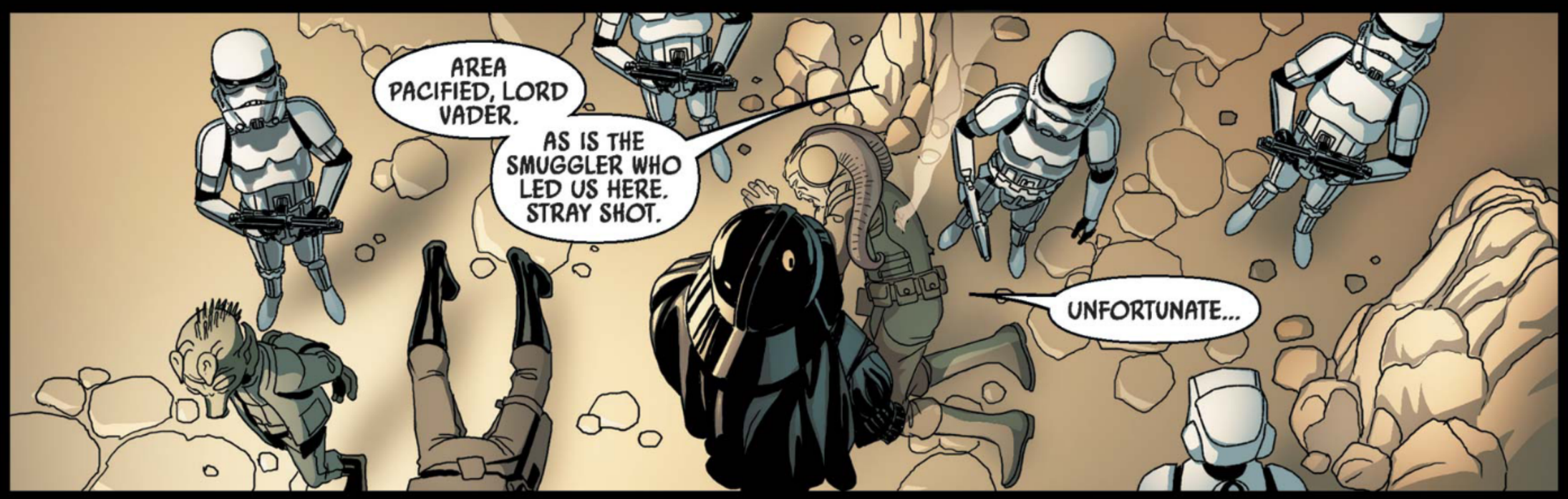
KLLK

GRRRRAW!
HMM.

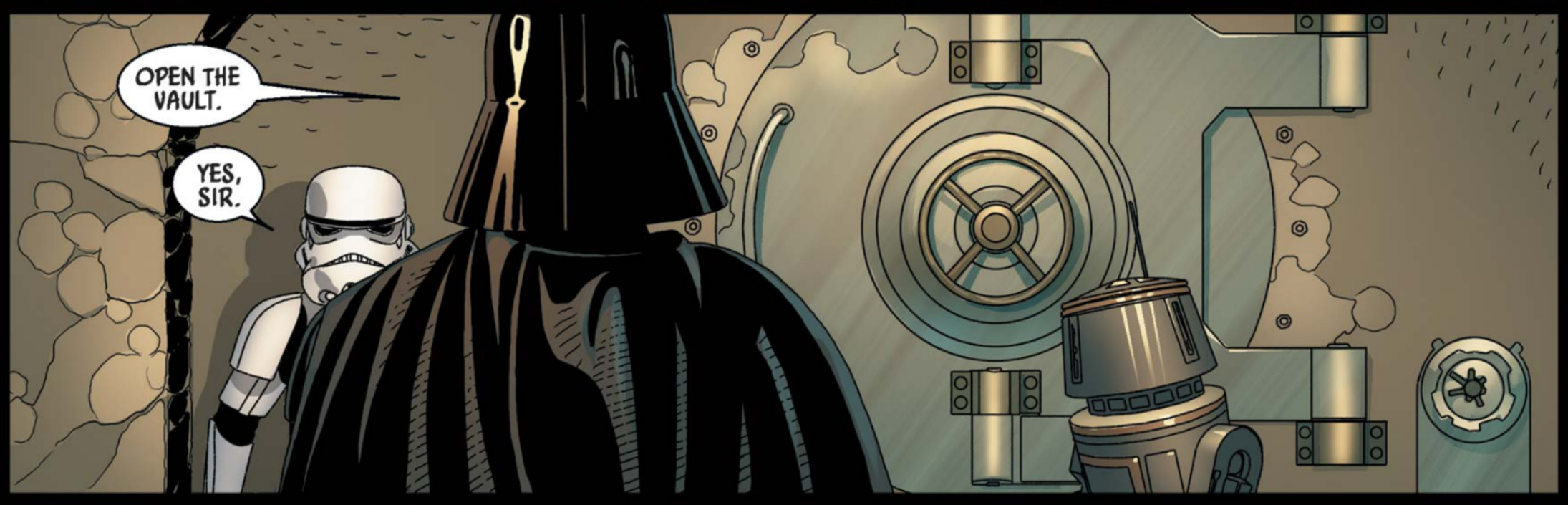
WHA--


N-N--



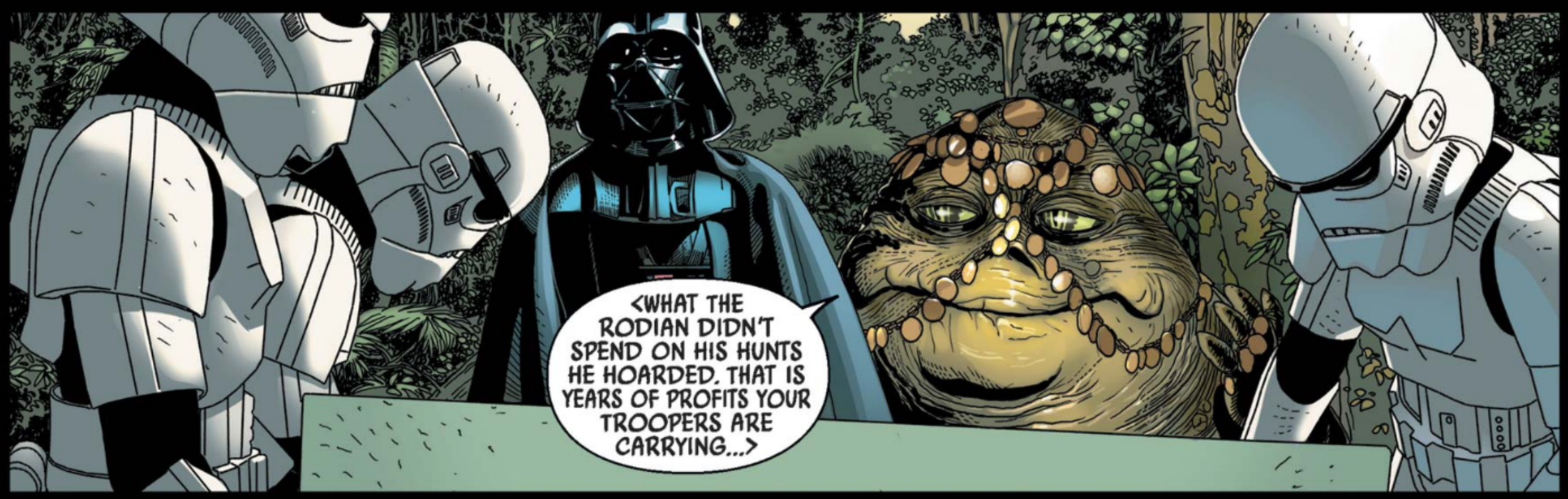

AREA PACIFIED, LORD VADER.
AS IS THE SMUGGLER WHO LED US HERE. STRAY SHOT.
UNFORTUNATE...

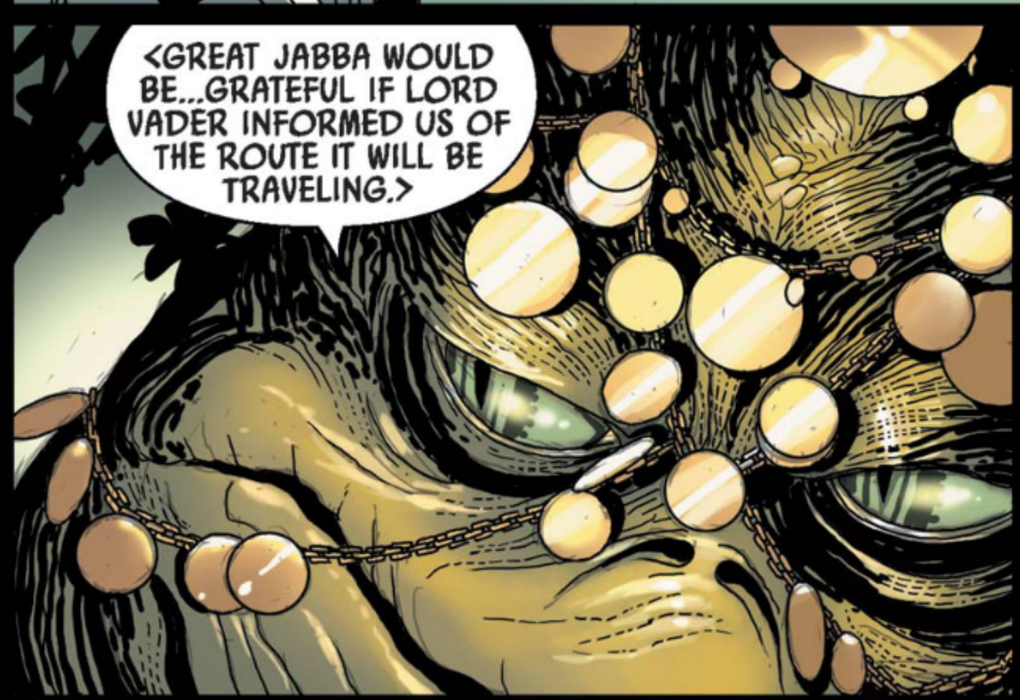
I SUSPECT HE HAD MORE INFORMATION.


OPEN THE VAULT.
YES, SIR.

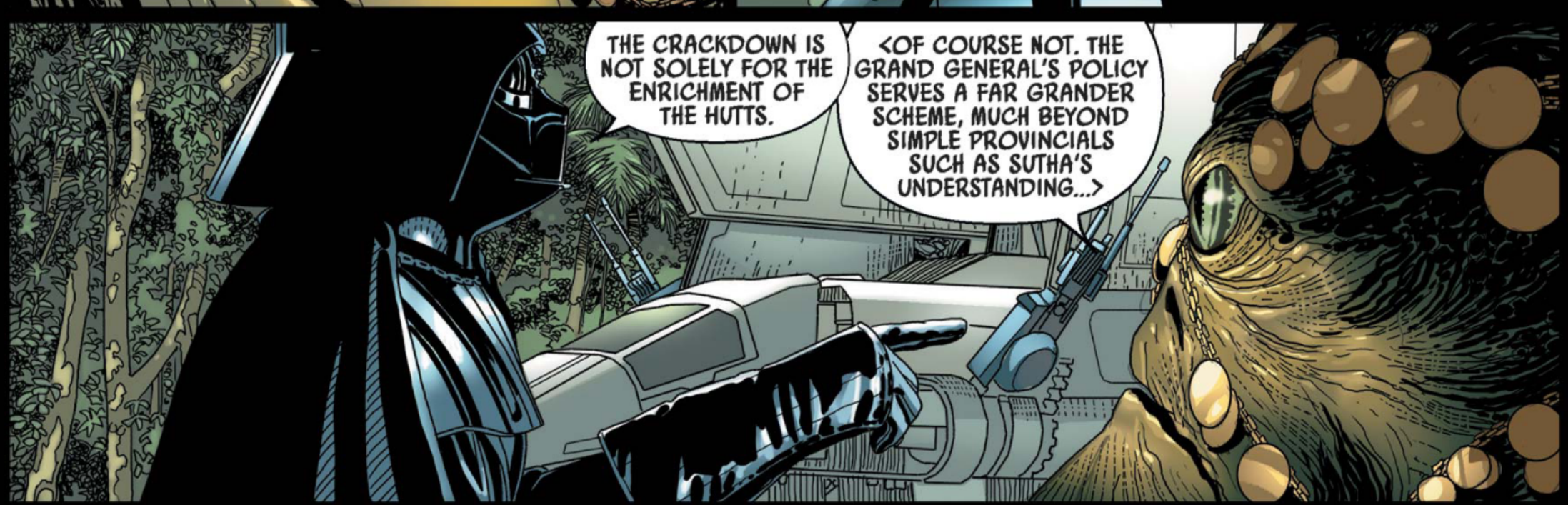
GATHER THE CONTRABAND...

"...IT MUST BE SAFELY CONFISCATED."
<THE RODIAN WAS A FORMIDABLE COMPETITOR...> SW
<GREAT JABBA WILL BE GLAD HE IS NO LONGER WITH US.>
SW TRANSLATED FROM HUTTESE
THE EMPIRE HAS LET THE OUTER RIM RUN WILD FOR TOO LONG, SUTHA.
THE RODIAN WAS OVERLY DISRUPTIVE.
IF THERE ARE TO BE...OTHER ACTIVE POWERS, THEY SHOULD BE ONES WITH WHOM THE EMPIRE HAS AN UNDERSTANDING.
<AND THE GREAT JABBA IS PLEASED THAT AN UNDERSTANDING WAS POSSIBLE.>
<WE SUPPLY THE RESOURCES THE EMPIRE SO BADLY REQUIRES AND YOU DISCREETLY SUPPLY US...OTHER MARKETS.>
<AND TRADE IN SON-TUUL IS CLEARLY MOST PROFITABLE.>


<WHAT THE RODIAN DIDN'T SPEND ON HIS HUNTS HE HOARDED. THAT IS YEARS OF PROFITS YOUR TROOPERS ARE CARRYING...>


<GREAT JABBA WOULD BE...GRATEFUL IF LORD VADER INFORMED US OF THE ROUTE IT WILL BE TRAVELING.>

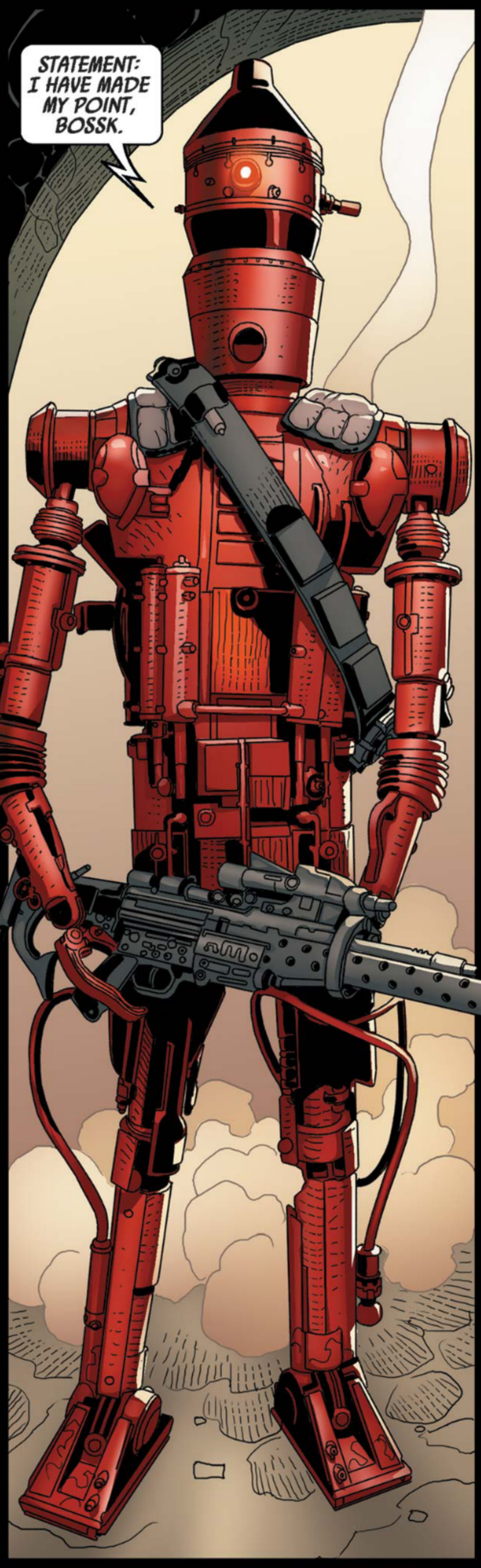
THAT IS IMPERIAL PROPERTY.

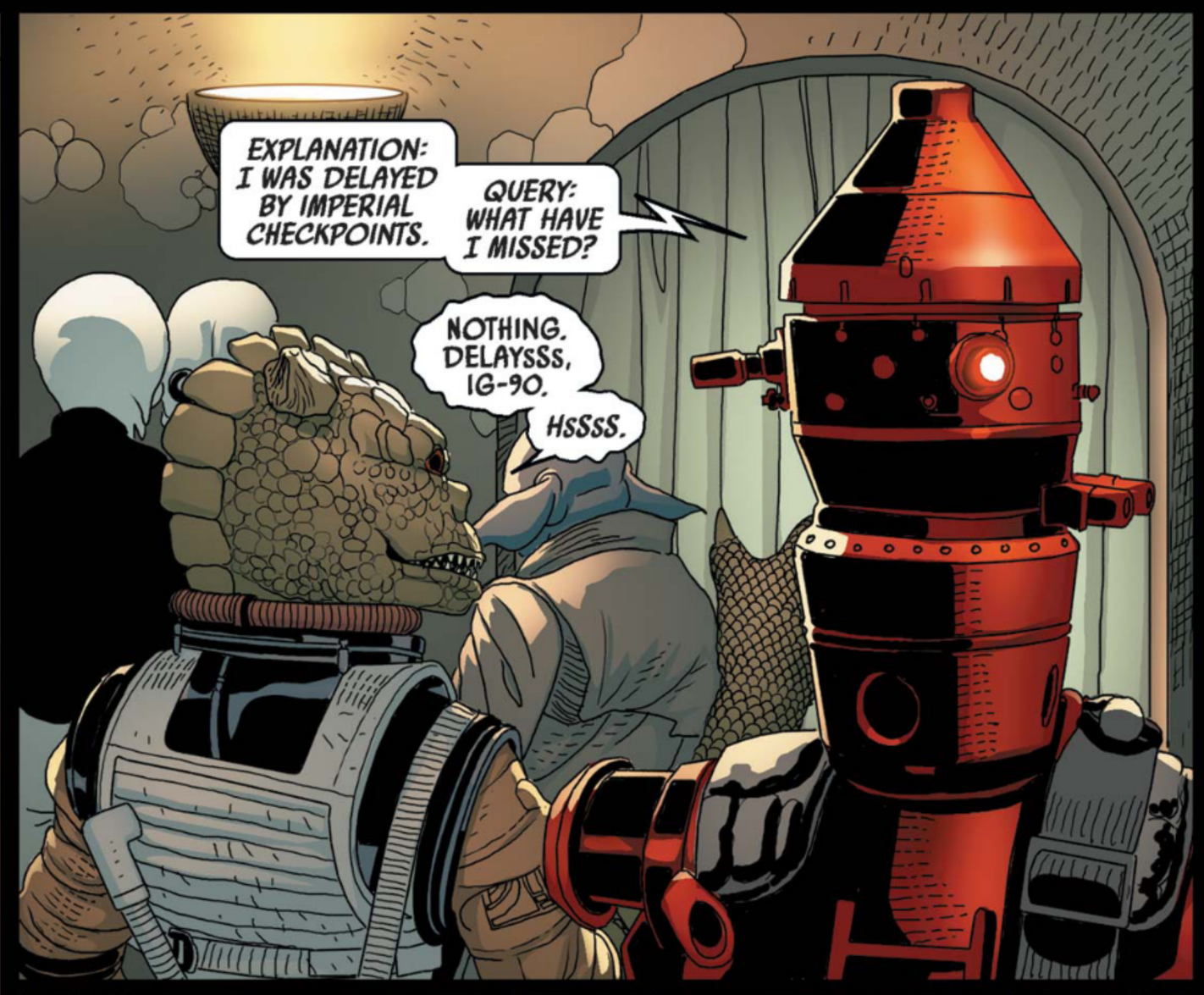

THE CRACKDOWN IS NOT SOLELY FOR THE ENRICHMENT OF THE HUTTS.
<OF COURSE NOT. THE GRAND GENERAL'S POLICY SERVES A FAR GRANDER SCHEME, MUCH BEYOND SIMPLE PROVINCIALS SUCH AS SUTHA'S UNDERSTANDING...>

<...BUT YOU MUST ADMIT IT *IS* A PLEASING SIDE-BENEFIT.>

THIS PLANET'S UNDERWORLD IS YOUR MASTER'S NOW. DO NOT OVERSTEP YOUR BOUNDARIES.
YOU WILL REGRET IT.

Son-tuul. Nearby.
I DON'T THINK SO.
YOUR KIND AREN'T WELCOME HERE.
FINISSSHED?
HHSSS.


STATEMENT: I HAVE MADE MY POINT, BOSSK.

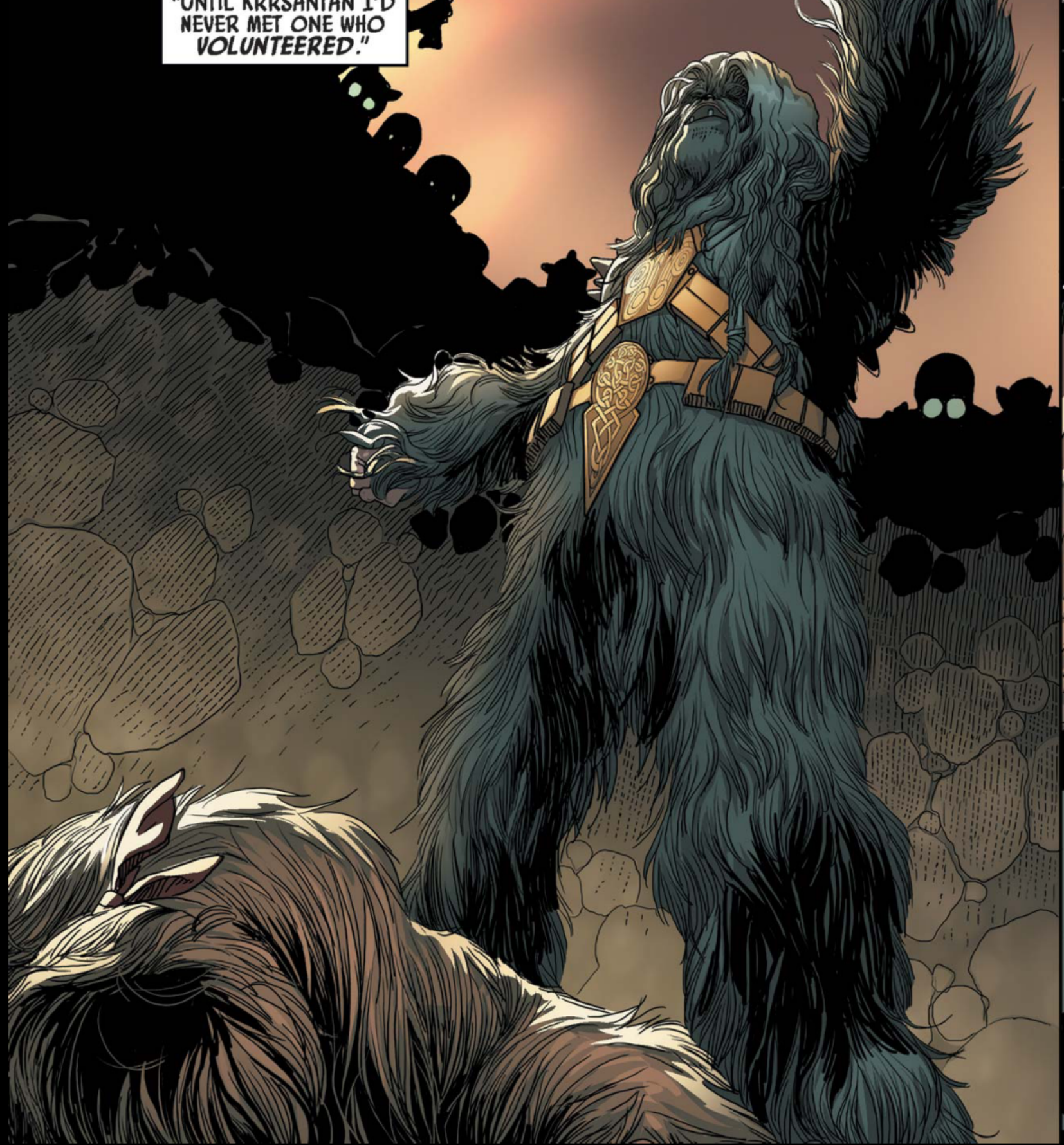

EXPLANATION: I WAS DELAYED BY IMPERIAL CHECKPOINTS.
QUERY: WHAT HAVE I MISSED?
NOTHING. DELAYSSS, IG-90.
HSSSS.

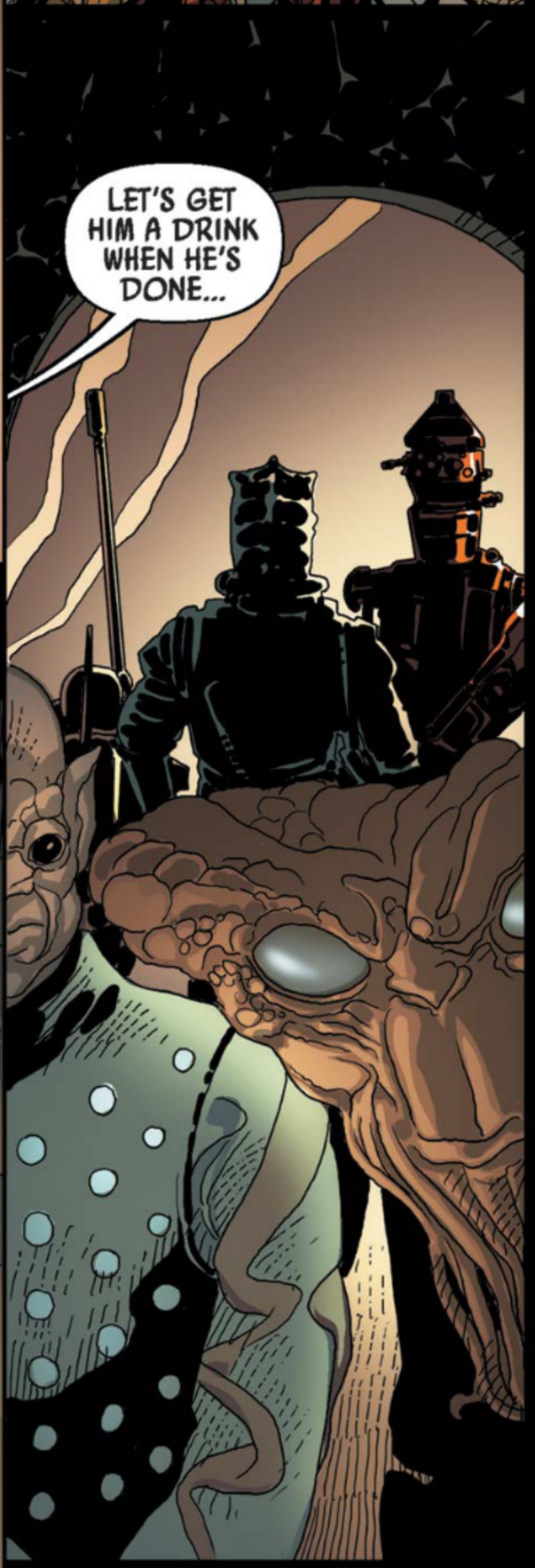
THE WOOKIEE SAW THERE WAS A PIT-FIGHT IN THE BACK...

DUMB LUMP GOT NOSTALGIC.

GGRRRRRWWWWLLL!
STATEMENT: FIGHTS ARE PLANNED IN ADVANCE.
QUERY: HOW IS HE A CONTESTANT?

HE STRANGLED THE OTHER FIGHTER AND STEPPED IN. NO ONE WAS GOING TO SAY NO.
I'VE CAPTURED ENOUGH WOOKIEESSS AND SSOLD THEM TO TRADERSSS TO FEED THE PITSSS...


"UNTIL KRRSANTAN I'D NEVER MET ONE WHO VOLUNTEERED."


LET'S GET HIM A DRINK WHEN HE'S DONE...

"...HE'S ALWAYS THIRSTY AFTER BEATING A GUY TO DEATH."
GGRRRRRWLLL!
YEAH, WE KNOW.

STANDARDS HAVE SLIPPED SINCE YOU QUIT.
WHAT'S THIS?

HEH. IT'S NOT EVEN MY BIRTHDAY.
GRRRWOOOLL!

QUIET DOWN AND WIPE YOUR MOUTH.
LADIES ARE PRESENT.

THANK YOU, MISTER BEEBOX.
NOW...IMPERIAL FORCES HAVE PERMANENTLY ENDED THE SON-TUUL PRIDE. THEY'RE DONE. THEIR PERSONAL FORTUNE IS IN TRANSIT TO ITS NEW HOME IN AN IMPERIAL VAULT.

STATEMENT: EVERYONE KNOWS THIS.
I KNOW A LITTLE EXTRA.
I KNOW EXACTLY HOW IT'S BEING TRANSPORTED, HOW TO CIRCUMVENT ITS GUARDS AND--MOST OF ALL--HOW TO GET AWAY.
SO, GENTLEMEN AND VIOLENT ROBOTS...
...WHO WANTS TO BE RICH?

THE EMPIRE WRITES BACK

DARTH VADER

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away is a lot easier to get to than you think – and we want to hear from you! Write us at StarWars@Marvel.com if you want to make it onto a future letters page. Don't forget to mark the letter "OK TO PRINT."

Hey guys, I've really been enjoying all the new Star Wars comics so far, particularly Darth Vader. However, I've been waiting to see that one thing that would really hook me. Definitely found it in *DARTH VADER #3!* Dr. Aphra's introduction as a darker Indiana Jones was perfect, and I'm excited to see how her character and relationship with Vader develops. I love that you don't include any thought bubbles for Vader, which somehow makes his expressionless stares emote so much, showing us that there is a living, thinking, feeling person behind the mask. With Anakin previously having lost an apprentice, I wonder if he will transfer that dynamic to Aphra?

Keep up the great work!

Josh

Thanks, Josh. When you're introducing new characters to *STAR WARS*, it's a pretty nerve-wracking ordeal. Not exactly being-locked-in-a-room-with-Triple-Zero nerve-wracking, but still pretty bad. That Doctor Aphra has gone down as well as she has been enormously relieving, especially as I'm having so much fun with her and would hate to have to stop. - Kieron.

Hey guys,

I just want to say thank you for Darth Vader's entrance in *DARTH VADER #1*. It was probably one of the best character introductions in comic books I've seen. It was a very cinematic slow opening that gave me a slight chill up my spine when I was reading it. It was only beaten by that final double page spread that reminded me why Vader is the Emperor's right hand. Keep up the good work Kieron, Salvador, and Edgar.

From,
Randy Z Ochoa

Oh man, Randy. Salva absolutely nailed it. Trying to nail the atmosphere is very much at the heart of what we're trying to do. When talking about the books in the early days with Jason, the guiding principle wasn't "how can you make a comic based on *STAR WARS?*" but "how can we make this feel like *STAR WARS?*" Stuff like the level of swagger at the start definitely feeds into that. That's the theory, anyway. - Kieron

I have been reading *DARTH VADER* since Issue #1 and have found it very interesting. The art is astounding, especially since Salvador has to draw Vader's complex helmet in just about every other panel. And great nod to Indiana Jones in Issue #3! Very cool. Looking forward to seeing Vader's complex character fleshed out each month.

- David Bacon

Thanks, David. You'll tell if Salva has grown bored of the helmet if I put a brown paper bag over his head at any point. - Kieron

Team,

These books have captured me off guard. Not only have they renewed my interest in *STAR WARS*, but they have also put Marvel back on my pull list! Both the *STAR WARS* and *VADER* series have become highlights to my comic reading.

Thank you for all your hard work,

EchelonXII

No, thank YOU for all your hard work, EchelonXII. I've always been a big fan. You're much better than EchelonI to EchelonXI. (Though I'll admit I've got a sentimental streak for EchelonVII. We had some crazy times when we were working the Rodeo.)

I'll stop writing now. - Kieron

Let me say that it is great to see you guys and the crew over at Darth Vader give the man behind the mask another look. Between the two main books, we are really plumbing the depths of that troubled soul! "Who knew anyone of note was ever born on Tatooine, eh?" Vader gazes off at the binary suns without response. Chills, I tell ya! It's also good to see him take on such a menacing presence! Crushing an AT-AT!? I remember Luke doing that in *DARK EMPIRE #1!* It's good to see that there is a kernel of truth to these "Legends!" Keep up the good work, team!

-Adam Thomas Pritchard

Working out exactly what level of kick-ass we should strike with the Force powers is actually quite a fun part of my job. Me, I'm more of a feed-a-dude-to-a-space-rhino-tiger-thing sort of guy, as evidenced by this issue. – Kieron

I have been VERY much enjoying the recent *STAR WARS* and *DARTH VADER* issues Marvel has put out. The teams of these books have done a great job! I really like the direction of the series – filling in the gaps between episodes. I'm especially excited to see all the machinations Vader has going on – seeing him in action again reminded me why he's the first class villain he always was. I especially like the nice touches, diving into his past, or at least hinting at his history from the prequels

Keep up the good work!

May the Force be with you
- Erik Hollender

That I get to write "May the Force Be With You" and get paid is one of the most amazing things about this job. I am very lucky. Glad it's working for you. - Kieron

Will we be seeing anymore characters that we thought were killed off in the movies? I mean I think back to how you guys brought back General Tagge. Good work on that. Course I would not mind you bring back a few other characters we saw in passing or from even Legends if possible.

Jonathan L. Polacek

The idea of using Tagge actually came from the Lucasfilm Story Group. I was looking for an ideological rival, and they thought that Tagge would fit the bill. In terms of other characters, you never know. It's certainly something we're considering. - Kieron

Hey Guys! I'm absolutely loving the new Marvel Star Wars series so far. I've purchased every new issue of each new series every week on release day almost religiously. I'd say these comics are the best thing to be added to the new canon by far, I feel that *DARTH VADER* is the most well-done of the bunch. The character of Vader is handled perfectly and I LOVE the references to the fact that he's still struggling with his old life as a Jedi. The flashback on Geonosis was incredible. With my praise out of the way, I do have a question for ya'! Going forward, what do you intend to do to please both old fans of the Legends material and the newer fans of the comics?

-Tim Finnegan

Thank you. Trying to balance between getting a sense of Vader's internal life during this period without reducing his mystique is a big part of writing the book. In terms of pleasing different fans, I tend to keep to the real core principles. As in, just worry about being as excellent as we're capable of getting. Having something that's good is the easiest way to actually please as many people as possible. That's stating the obvious, I know, but it's also a useful magnetic north when you start over-thinking things. - Kieron

Is it possible that the new *DARTH VADER* comic is more popular than the new *STAR WARS* comic?! I do think both are hitting on all cylinders, but I think Darth is a little more of a guilty pleasure! Just finished issue #5 and I loved it!

I'm digging the new BT and Triple-Zero! I remember when my brother and I dressed up as C-3PO and R2-D2 for Halloween! We loved it! If BT and Triple-Zero continue to get more popular, I bet his kids will want to be them for Halloween! We shall see! And I look forward to seeing what Kieron, Salvador, Edgar, Joe and team have planned for Darth in upcoming issues! Make mine Darth Vader Marvel!

Topher Shelton

Thanks! I probably have a little too much fun with Triple-Zero and BeeTee. I just put them in almost any situation, and Triple-Zero has something to say, normally involving some manner of murder. - Kieron